

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 8186

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, MX

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH JULIO SCHERER GARCIA ON PRESIDENTIAL
SUCCESSION

1. SUMMARY: ON SEPT 10 I HAD LUNCH WITH JULIO SCHERER GARCIA,
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF EXCELSIOR. IN THE COURSE OF OUR CONVER-
SATION, SCHERER WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS ABOUT, AMONG OTHER THINGS,
THE MEXICAN PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION. HE INDICATED THAT THE
CHOICES HAD NARROWED TO A CLOSE RACE AMONG MARIO MOYA PALENCIA
(SEC GOVERNMENT), HUGO CERVANTES DEL RIO (SEC PRESIDENCY) AND
AUGUSTO GOMEZ VILLANUEVA (SEC AGRARIAN REFORM) WITH THE
LATTER TWO BEING MORE LIKELY CANDIDATES. (END SUMMARY).

2. SCHERER INDICATED THAT, BECAUSE OF PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA'S
SECRETIVE, COMPLICATED PERSONALITY AND HIS POWER TO IMPOSE HIS
CHOICE, ANY ONE OF THE THREE WAS POSSIBLY. HOWEVER,
SCHERER THOUGHT THAT, DESPITE EARLIER INDICATIONS, THE CHOICE
WOULD NOT BE MOYA. MOYA HAD NOT BEEN A STRONG SECRETARY OF
GOVERNMENT. THE HIDALGO INCIDENT WAS ILLUSTRATIVE: ANY TIME
A GOVERNOR HAD TO BE KICKED OUT A MONTH AFTER HE WAS
INAUGURATED, ONE COULD ASSUME THAT SECRETARY OF GOVERN-
MENT HAD NOT DONE HIS JOB. THAT FIVE MINISTERS, INSTEAD
OF JUST MOYA, WERE SENT TO RESOLVE THE SITUATION ALSO
SHOWED WEAKNESS. SCHERER SAID THAT THERE WERE IN-
CREASINGLY STRONG INDICATIONS RECENTLY THAT THE PRESIDENT
WAS NOT GOING TO CHOOSE MOYA. SCHERER ADDED THAT THERE
WERE TWO THINGS ABOUT MOYA WHICH HE COULD NOT STAND
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(ALTHOUGH HE LIKED MOYA PERSONALLY): 1) HIS SUPPORT FROM

CONSERVATIVES AND BIG BUSINESS AND 2) HIS ATTEMPTS TO THROTTLE THE PRESS. OF ALL THE HIGHER GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIALS, ONLY MOYA INTERFERED (WITH EXCELSIOR) BY PHONING SPECIAL "INSTRUCTIONS".

3. CERVANTES DEL RIO WAS A POSSIBILITY BECAUSE PRESIDENT ECHVERRIA THOUGHT HE COULD BE CONTROLLED EVEN AFTER HE WAS ELECTED. SCHERER WAS DISPARAGING OF CERVANTES. ALTHOUGH HE WAS ACCEPTABLE AS A CABINET OFFICER, CERVANTES LACKED THE TWO INGREDIENTS, EITHER OF WHICH WOULD QUALIFY HIM AS A TRUE LEADER: THE ABILITY TO DYNAMIZE PEOPLE AROUND HIM OR THE ABILITY TO SELECT GOOD PEOPLE AND BE DYNAMIZED BY THEM IN TURN. AS A PRESIDENT, CERVANTES WOULD BE BARELY ADEQUATE OR RUN OF THE MILL, NOT THE SORT OF PRESIDENT NEEDED BY THE MEXICO OF TODAY.

4. GOMEZ VILLANUEVA IS A POSSIBILITY BECAUSE HE SHARES PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA'S LEFTIST PHILOSOPHY. (NOTE: SEVERAL MONTHS AGO SCHERER TOLD ME THAT GOMEZ WAS A STRONG POSSIBILITY AND WOULD BEAR WATCHING). SCHERER SAID THAT ALTHOUGH GOMEZ WOULD BE GOOD FOR HIM(SCHERER) PERSONALLY, HE WOULD BE A POLITICAL DISASTER FOR MEXICO AS HE WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIVISIVE. A MAN OF THE LEFT, GOMEZ IS SIMULTANEOUSLY LACKING IN MENTAL DISCIPLINE AND IN THE ABILITY TO MAKE POLITICAL COMPROMISES.

5. SCHERER ADDED THAT HIS OWN PERSONAL CHOICE IS LABOR SECRETARY PORFIRIO MUNOZ LEDO, BUT THAT MUNOZ DOES NOT HAVE A CHANCE.

6. COMMENT: IN CLOSING WEEKS PRIOR TO THE "UNCOVERING" OF THE PRI'S NEXT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE (AND MEXICO'S NEXT PRESIDENT), OPINIONS ARE A DIME A DOZEN. NEVERTHELESS, SCHERER GARCIA IS ONE OF THE BEST INFORMED NEWS EDITOR IN MEXICO AND HIS OPINION, DESPITE EMBASSY RESERVATIONS, IS WORTH NOTING.
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